

Early this month in Washington Heights a young woman slipped away from the intense people who had been crowding her apartment, folded a desperate note into a paper airplane and sailed it out the living-room window.

The note twisted down through the winter twilight to the feet of a mother and child out for a walk. While the young woman waved frantically from the window, the mother picked up the note and read it:

"Please help to get me out of here. I am being held a prisoner in my own apartment, 9 Cabrini Boulevard, Apt. 4A. They're going to move me soon to some unknown location. I will try to leave some clue in my room if the police get here too late. . . ." The note was signed Alice Weitzman.

By the time the police arrived 40 minutes later, a corner was already being lifted off one of the strangest episodes in the history of the American left.

Police Told of Plot

What has emerged is one of the last survivals of the student activism of the nineteen-sixties—the steady progression of a committed far-left organization from theoretical writing to the violent descriptions of sadism, from praise of humanism to physical violence against opponents, from hopeful debate about ideas to an embittered conviction that nearly the entire world is engaged in a conspiracy against it.

When the police arrived on Cabrini Boulevard that evening, they found the apartment crowded with well-dressed militants of a Marxist group called the National Caucus of Labor Committees. Six of the group were arrested and charged with unlawfully imprisoning Miss Weitzman, a member who had been recently expressing skepticism about the organization's views.

The group explained to the police that they had been "staying" with their fellow member because she had been brainwashed and "programmed" by what they described as a cabal including both the Central Intelligence Agency and the K.G.B., the Soviet espionage organization. The plot, they said, involved assassination of their leader.

Among those arrested, all

How a Radical-Left Group Moved Toward Savagery

By PAUL L. MONTGOMERY

were the son of a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia Affairs, the daughter of an Episcopalian priest in Connecticut and the son of the chairman of the electrophysics department at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Other members, who emerged later included the daughter of the president of Sarah Lawrence College and the son of a vice president of the Ford Foundation.

The six were arraigned the next morning and released in \$1,000 bail. The case is still pending in the courts, though Miss Weitzman in the meantime has become a reluctant witness against her former friends. "What they need, you can't provide in a court," she said at one preliminary hearing last week.

The Genesis

This history of the Labor Committees is a seven-year story in which the group, now estimated to include between 600 and 1,000 intensely committed members here and in Europe, was formed from elements of Students for a Democratic Society in the waning days of the student movement, and played a leading role in the Columbia University strike.

The early phase was a calm time of writing and attempting to organize workers for a world revolution. Those who joined it then say they did so because it was an intelligent alternative to the violence of the Weathermen or the inaction of drugs or communes.

In its later period, however, the group has gone on to psychosexual speculation about behavior modification, and still further, last year to savage beatings of — by their own count—at least 40 political opponents principally members of the Communist party and black-power activists.

Labor Committees disrupted the Senate Watergate hearings one day last summer and ran zealous campaigns for local office in New York, Newark and other cities last fall, none of which drew more than 2,000 votes.

Target of Conspiracy

Now the group is convinced it is the target of a vast conspiracy embracing, among many other elements, the C.I.A., the K.G.B., British intelligence, the New York City government, the Rockefeller family and the anthropology department at Columbia University.

secretly gotten access to some of their members a "programmed" them like computers to invent spurious titles and assassinate leaders.

Behind all the changes founder and present chairman of the caucus, a 51-year Marxist teacher and politician who uses the name Marcus. Among his current beliefs is that he is the only man in the world capable of "deprogramming" the alleged victims of the brainwashing conspiracy.

Mr. Marcus has already subjected several members of the organization to his techniques, which appear to include hypnosis and deprivation of solid food, and plans to use them on at least several more.

One of those being kept in "isolation" for "deprogramming" is a member who was sent to Bellevue Hospital last week after being found running on the streets screaming "Decontrol me! Decontrol me!" Another, until the police excommunicated her, was Miss Weitzman in Washington Heights.

'Human Race at Stake'

Mr. Marcus, whom former colleagues described as a brilliant synthesizer of ideas into coherent systems, believes that unless he breaks the "conspiracy," the world is doomed. "Any of you who say this is a hoax—You're cruds! You're subhuman! You're not serious!" he said in a speech on Jan. 3. "The human race is at stake. Either we win or there is no humanity. That's the way she's cut."

People who have left the movement are astonished at the turn it has taken. Where once members talked of nonviolence and human creativity, they now spend their waking hours being harangued in violent speeches studded with accusations that their enemies are forcing them to eat excrement, perform fellatio on pigs and dogs, and submit to homosexual rape.

At their dingy headquarters in a garment center loft on West 29th Street, Labor Committee youths assigned to "security" sit at the door twirling nunchaku sticks—lethal karate weapons made of two clubs joined by a chain. Twenty or 30 red-eyed men and women rush about answering telephones, operating mimeograph machines.

Members seem incapable of talking about anything but the conspiracy.

will be singled out as a washing victim. Mr. Marcus has told them that they are not responsible for their thoughts or actions because of the "programming."

"Don't believe a thing you say," at least one Labor Committee adherent was told. "Wait till you check it out with a competent authority." The competent authorities are Mr. Marcus and a handful of assistants whom he has certified by "depth analysis" sessions.

"It's the saddest thing I've ever seen," said one member who withdrew recently. "The Labor Committee used to say that people have the power to change the world by thinking. Now they have come to just the opposite conclusion — by thinking, or questioning, you can damage the organization."

Though a few have left the group in disgust over its latest phase, it has managed to hold most of its members, of whom there are about 180 in New York, perhaps 50 in Boston and the rest scattered through 23 cells in the United States and 11 in Europe and Canada.

Total commitment is required for members. Jobs and families are expected to be secondary to party work; almost all members who are married also have spouses in the movement. Dues are \$24 a month, which pay for publications, rents, propaganda and six salaried officials.

The Highest Stipend

Mr. Marcus says he gets \$50 a week, the highest stipend. He says that "contributions" also help pay for his frequent trips to Europe and other expenses. It is known that one young member liquidated her trust fund this month to help pay for the blizzard of press releases about brainwashing.

The unimportance of family ties seems to be stressed. In Criminal Court the other day, two of the defendants in the Washington Heights case — Mary Fletcher, daughter of an Episcopalian priest, and Khushro Gandhi, whose father is at Rensselaer Polytechnic — were prodding a third, Daniel Sneider,

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Committees

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